

**THE HON RICHARD MARLES MP  
ACTING LEADER OF THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY  
SHADOW MINISTER FOR DEFENCE  
MEMBER FOR CORIO**

**E&OE TRANSCRIPT  
TELEVISION INTERVIEW  
TODAY SHOW  
FRIDAY, 11 OCTOBER 2019**

***SUBJECT/S: Climate protests; climate change; Developments in Syria and Turkey***

**DEBORAH KNIGHT:** Now, they promised major chaos and climate activists are certainly delivering, gluing themselves to roads, stopping traffic, and vowing to ramp up their action to a disruptive peak today in cities right across the country. Home Affairs Minister, Peter Dutton joins us now along with Deputy Opposition Leader, Richard Marles. Good morning to you both.

**ACTING LEADER OF THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY, RICHARD MARLES:** Good morning, Deb.

**PETER DUTTON:** Good morning.

**KNIGHT:** We live in a democracy; we fought wars to protect free speech. Peter, these people have got a right to protest, don't they?

**DUTTON:** They do, but this goes well beyond that. Nobody would say that people aren't entitled to express their view and to express it forcefully. But this is a disruptive element. It is similar to what you see with G20 gatherings. These people are radicals, outliers and I think frankly they do their cause more harm than good. So, I think it is right that the police will interact with them today. Hopefully a lot of them are arrested or moved on, because there is a huge disruption to the CBDs- which is what they want. That is what they aim to do.

**KNIGHT:** That is the aim of protests.

**DUTTON:** Of course it is. When you cross that line, which these people do, I think they are frankly just stumping their nose at Australians who want to go to work, run their businesses, don't want to be disrupted by these people.

**KNIGHT:** Some of the most extreme elements of this group say they are full-time protesters. Should we go so far as to cut their welfare payments, make them pay for the police action?

**DUTTON:** I think very strongly that we should be charging these people the cost of the police response. I think if you are conducting yourself in a peaceful way, which happens

every day around the country, people from unions, from organisations, will have a permit from the police, they will have an agreed route, they will have messaging, they do it peacefully and that's completely acceptable. But when you are acting outside of the law, which these people are doing, you are diverting valuable police resources. I think there should be a price to pay for that. It has happened in Victoria where the State Government before has sought to levy that charge of the police response to the organisers.

**KNIGHT:** There is a precedent for that.

**DUTTON:** Of course there is.

**KNIGHT:** The climate issue, Richard, has seen your Shadow Agricultural Joel Fitzgibbon break ranks, he's calling on Labor to adopt the Coalition's emissions reduction target. Industry groups have backed it. Do you support that idea?

**MARLES:** There is a whole discussion we need to go through. We will obviously do that over the next couple of years, in the lead-up to the next election in terms of what our policies are. Certainly what I do see is that on the other side, we don't have a climate policy coming out of government. And I understand the frustration that people feel out there-

**KNIGHT:** We are talking Labor Party. What about you?

**MARLES:** Well, we lost the election, which we didn't, but we did-

**KNIGHT:** But you have to promote alternative policies.

**MARLES:** We've got three years before we go to the next election. So we will take our time to get those policies right. In the meantime, we will have a discussion and that is what you would imagine that we would do, but over the next three years it is up to this mob here, who got elected, to actually work out what they're going to do.

**KNIGHT:** Do you back Joel Fitzgibbon or not?

**MARLES:** There is a discussion going on-

**KNIGHT:** Be but you personally?

**MARLES:** I hear what Joel said, and Joel has a right to say it. But we will have a conversation within the party about exactly how we go forward on this-

**DUTTON:** That is a polite description for civil war.

**MARLES:** No it is not.

**DUTTON:** These are the opening shots in a civil war and, of course, Anthony is overseas at the moment, so all these guys are running riot with different ideas-

**MARLES:** You wish.

**DUTTON:** The kids are in control of the house. It is party time. So these guys don't know what they are doing-

**MARLES:** You wish, Peter-

**KNIGHT:** There is a lot of navel gazing going on. You gave a speech last night where you talked very openly about the issues that Labor has to confront. You said Labor was offering handouts rather than hope. Are you concerned that Labor has just really lost that traditional base?

**MARLES:** May 18 was an incredibly difficult day for the Labor movement. This was, you know, losing that election for us, it feels like a catastrophe and obviously. And being on the wrong side of the Parliament, you absolutely get the sense of importance, you don't change people's lives sitting on the side of the Parliament that we do. We are not going to move forward and win the next election unless we learn the lessons from what happened on May 18. You don't do that without having a proper discussion. Let's be clear, we will have that discussion, but we're also going to make sure that we're holding these Muppets to account because they are a very ordinary Government. And we're going to do everything we can to make sure that your viewers, that we are sincerely trying to win their vote and make Anthony Albanese the next Prime Minister at the next election.

**KNIGHT:** Now, the Kurds in Syria say they have been betrayed and left to the slaughter after the shock withdrawal of U.S. troops effectively gave Turkey the green light to invade. Australia has now been called on to stop this further action. Peter, what concrete action can Australia take? Will we impose sanctions?

**DUTTON:** Deb, obviously the Turks have their own domestic necessities. They are worried about their border. So they have got their own motivations. It is the case though that the SDF- the Syrian Democratic Forces- have provided stability, they provided support. And the Kurds, of course, have been stabilising force for us and we have worked very closely-

**KNIGHT:** They have lost many lives during the fight against ISIS.

**DUTTON:** I always feel on these debates, the Americans are condemned for having troops there or condemned for not having troops there. In some cases, they can't win. Now, we need to make sure, and I think President Trump, to be honest, has sent very clear messages that he is not interested in seeing the Kurds attacked. He is not interested in seeing the Turkish forces go beyond their mandate. So let's wait and see what happens.

**KNIGHT:** President Trump himself has tweeted a few minutes ago that they're looking at imposing sanctions on Turkey. Would Australia consider the same thing?

**DUTTON:** Australia will do what is in our best interests. The Prime Minister has expressed concern particularly for those people that have been fighting alongside us or fighting in our interests. We want stability in the region, but these are complex issues that have been around for thousands of years and it is a very complex part of the world and we will continue to work. Ultimately, our desire is to see DAESH or ISIL defeated. We don't want to see resurgence of that terrorist activity. That is the principle aim for us.

**MARLES:** And I think that is the point to remember. A re-emergence of ISIS in Northern Syria would be absolutely appalling. And, Syria over the last decade has been really the great human tragedy that the world has witnessed. I just hope that this is not the next chapter in Syria's misery. The world is rightly condemning Turkey at the moment. But America could have foreseen that this is what would have happened. I certainly never condemned America for participating in Syria and being a stabilising force there. I think we all watch with enormous gloom about what is playing out there.

**KNIGHT:** There are more than 60 Australian women and children in refugee camps in this area in Syria. Will, Peter, Australia be moving to get them out?

**DUTTON:** Well, again, it is a very complex picture when you look at the individual cases. There are some people who don't want to come home. There are others we are told-

**KNIGHT:** There are some who do.

**DUTTON:** There are others we are told would face -if they return to Australia, they would pose a significant security threat to us. There are young kids up to teenage kids obviously, you have a different response to toddlers than you have young teenage boys, so we have to work through each of those cases, but the Government has been very clear; that we aren't going to put Defence or DFAT or Home Affairs personnel at risk. We need to work through the individual cases. In some circumstances, we don't even know whether or not children are Australian citizens. So there are very complex matters to deal with. We are trying to look at it on an individual basis.

**MARLES:** I actually think that is a fair response. It is important to be looking after the welfare of children, but the welfare of the Australian public is critical as well and Peter will obviously have briefings about individuals concerned and it is important we are making sure we are protecting the Australian public here.

**KNIGHT:** Good to have you both. Don't get up to toomuch trouble.

**ENDS**

Authorised by Paul Erickson, ALP, Canberra